

ICANN | GAC

Governmental Advisory Committee

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Governmental Advisory Committee Comments Regarding Draft FY21-25 Operating & Financial Plan and Draft FY21 Operating Plan & Budget

Introduction

The ICANN Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the Draft FY21-25 Operating & Financial Plan and Draft FY21 Operating Plan & Budget published on 20 December 2019 (see – <https://www.icann.org/public-comments/draft-opplan-budget-fy21-25-2019-12-20-en>). GAC members have reviewed ICANN org’s planning documents and proposals and herein provide targeted comments regarding specific aspects of the draft budget process that are applicable to GAC activities.¹

General Comments

The GAC thanks the ICANN org Finance Team for the regular improvements to the detail and scope of information provided in the draft operating plan and budget materials. Over the past few years, the GAC Leadership has observed the efforts of the ICANN Finance Team to improve the format and detail of the extensive materials made available for review. The GAC Leadership appreciates the willingness of the finance team to engage with GAC leadership and individual GAC members on the organization’s financial and operational planning efforts.

The GAC takes seriously its responsibilities as a part of the ICANN Empowered Community and hopes that support for programs such as the one outlined in these comments – a capacity building workshop program that supports the organization’s long-term strategic goals – can be appropriately resourced and supported on an ongoing basis. The committee looks forward to future dialogue with the ICANN Finance and Executive Teams on these relevant matters.

¹ This comment was prepared by the Committee’s leadership and is made on behalf of the entire GAC. It has been subjected to review of the GAC membership and is intended to complement, but not replace, any input that may be provided on the Draft FY21-25 Operating & Financial Plan and Draft FY21 Operating Plan & Budget by individual GAC members.

Specific Comments

- **Resources Requested to Support the GAC's Successful Capacity Building Workshop Program**

Introduction

Informed and active GAC participant contributions to the work of the committee in the Empowered Community environment are critical to maintain the legitimacy of the ICANN multistakeholder model. This is a particularly unique need of the GAC because the committee experiences substantial turnover of GAC participants (approximately 25%) on an annualized basis.

Since 2017, the GAC has, in partnership with the ICANN Government Engagement (GE) Team, developed, championed and implemented a successful capacity building workshop program that has reach nearly 200 participants from various regions around the world. This targeted government participant outreach program has built awareness about the GAC and its role in ICANN, served as a useful recruitment tool for new GAC members and expanded the knowledge capacity of existing GAC participants throughout the world.

These workshop program efforts have increased participation in GAC activities and strengthened relationships between GAC members and the rest of the ICANN multistakeholder community. The GAC would like these capabilities to be made a permanent part of the core ICANN budget rather than the committee needing to rely on annual additional budget requests which are temporary in nature and potentially inconsistent in availability.

The GAC's commitment to its ongoing capacity building workshop program is wholly consistent with the goals outlined in ICANN's [Five-Year Strategic Plan \(FY21-FY25\)](#). Specifically, this ongoing program activity will support:

Strategic Goal - Support and grow active, informed, and effective stakeholder participation (see Strategic Plan page 16).

Including Targeted Outcomes –

- Meaningful stakeholder participation increases, demonstrated by community members effectively engaged in multistakeholder model processes and committed to cooperating toward an agreed-upon global public interest; and
- The knowledge and skill levels across the stakeholder community and organization increase, demonstrated by community members and staff equipped with basic knowledge of the DNS as well as ICANN policy and advisory processes.

Strategic Goal - Continue to build alliances in the Internet ecosystem and beyond to raise awareness and equip stakeholders from around the world to become active participants in ICANN's policy making (See Strategic Plan page 25).

Including Targeted Outcomes –

- ICANN fosters successful and mutually beneficial relationships with local, regional, and global partners to ensure knowledge building about ICANN and its mission continues.
- ICANN is engaged, its role acknowledged, and its presence valued in the arenas where topics within its remit are discussed; and
- ICANN plays an important role in raising awareness among legislators, regulators, and stakeholders about its mission and the effect of various regulatory and other proposals on the Internet ecosystem.

Background of Workshop Program

In 2017, the GAC and the ICANN GE Team began to conduct prototype capacity building workshops to promote informed participation in GAC affairs. These workshops were directed at encouraging participation from current GAC members and membership prospects to inform them about the basics of ICANN and to encourage them to more actively participate in GAC work by educating them about particular “hot-topic” DNS policy issues of importance to governments. At targeted workshops, special curriculums aimed at local law enforcement entities were also designed to encourage participants to join GAC working groups like the Public Safety Working Group.

The GAC’s experience with these workshops was very successful – resulting in increased understanding and involvement by GAC participants and leading to new countries joining the GAC. For the first two years, the program relied on special resource allocations from the ICANN GE Team. Then, utilizing the ICANN SO-AC Additional Budget Request (ABR) process, in FY19 the GAC was allocated limited resources to conduct a single workshop in conjunction with the ICANN65 Public Meeting in Marrakech.

Further supported by the ABR process, during the current FY20 year the GAC is in the midst of implementing a proactive plan for four (4) capacity building workshops – two (2) to be held in conjunction with ICANN public meetings and two (2) during targeted multistakeholder regional meetings in partnership with a host country or organization (see - <https://community.icann.org/display/projfinadhocws/GAC+-+FY20+Additional+Budget+Requests>). The first FY20 workshop was held in Bahrain in September 2019 and three additional workshops are currently being planned for Cancun (ICANN67), the Solomon Islands (April 2020) and Kuala Lumpur (ICANN68).²

² Planning for the ICANN67 - Cancun workshop is now being modified based on the recent ICANN Board Resolutions 2020.02.19.01 – 2020.02.19.04

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FY21 and Future Budget Considerations

For the latest FY21 year planning effort, the GAC has, again, made use of the ICANN community Additional Budget Request (ABR process (see - [https://community.icann.org/display/projfinadhocws/GAC+-FY21+Additional+Budget+Requests?preview=/126424692/126424693/GAC%20FY21%20Additional%20Budget%20Request%20-%20FY21%20GAC%20Capacity%20Building%20Workshops%20\(Final\).docx](https://community.icann.org/display/projfinadhocws/GAC+-FY21+Additional+Budget+Requests?preview=/126424692/126424693/GAC%20FY21%20Additional%20Budget%20Request%20-%20FY21%20GAC%20Capacity%20Building%20Workshops%20(Final).docx)) to seek support for a total of four (4) workshop events in FY21 - including in conjunction with the ICANN 71 and 72 public meetings.

On an annual basis, the GAC's interest in resources for supporting the workshop program now faces a substantial number of competing community requests. For example, for FY21, the GAC workshop proposal for ABR resources faces competition with 32 other separate requests from ICANN supporting organizations, advisory committees, stakeholder groups and constituencies. That competition should not be necessary for an established and successful core advisory committee program. See - <https://community.icann.org/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=44958870>

Given that competition, the GAC is not optimistic that it's ABR request for FY21 will be fully approved. In order to avoid a scenario where the GAC receives only partial or no funding at all of its latest ABR proposal, the committee asks that the ICANN budget reflect an annual \$50,000 commitment to the workshop program in FY21 and for future years. Such a commitment would enable the GAC to focus on long term strategic plans for the workshop program. Moreover, it would reduce potential annual competition with requests from other ICANN communities.

Closing

Face-to-face capacity-development workshops allow for more sustained and informed participation by GAC members within ICANN activities as well as provide opportunities for local (or regional) high-level decision-makers who are not regular GAC representatives, to attend and enhance their appreciation and resource support for GAC/ICANN activities.

The GAC is grateful to ICANN for this opportunity to share the committee's perspective on the Draft FY21-25 Operating & Financial Plan and Draft FY21 Operating Plan & Budget and looks forward to having its capacity building workshop program become a core part of the annual ICANN commitment of resources to the community. The GAC looks forward to contributing to future comment opportunities as they relate to ICANN's finances and other operations-related proceedings.

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